STB News

January 2004

Min Park, interim head of STB-EPO

STB-EPO Interim Manager Min Park: Dual Interests in Biology *and* Education

Min Park, the new interim program manager of the Science and Technology Base Programs Education Program Office (STB-EPO), came to Los Alamos National Laboratory as a biologist.

He holds a Ph.D. in molecular biology from the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, and he has been a staff member in the Bioscience Division (B Division, formerly the Life Sciences Division) for 15 years. His specialties in biology are cancer research, structural genomics, and protein engineering.

But biology is not his only interest. He also believes passionately in the importance of education.

Park spent considerable time as a member of the Student Programs Advisory Committee (SPAC) and was deeply involved with the Northern New Mexico Council for Excellence in Education (NNMCEE, created in 1997) before he first came to STB. "I worked with a lot of students and postdocs," he said in a recent interview. He was also part of the Math and Science Academy program, conceived in 1999 and implemented in 2000, "from day one."

Park has published papers and established programs in education, and he was attracted to the idea of trying out his ideas at STB. In January 2003, he formally established a 50-50 schedule—half in B Division and half in STB. He said, "I enjoyed my work tremendously here." He especially recalled developing the Northern New Mexico Technology Consortium, which provides computers and educational-technology professional development to teachers and students.

However, he still missed his research in biology, and late in 2003, he went back to B Division. Then, he said, "Allen called me."

(Please see PARK on page 3.)

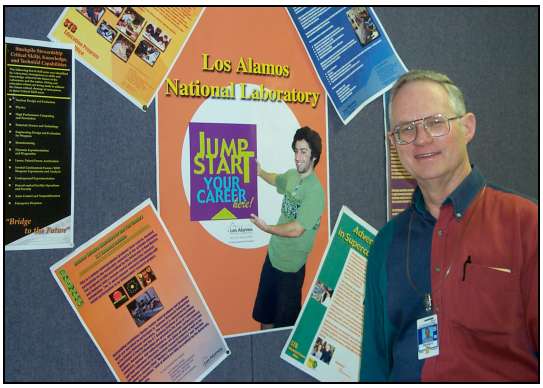
Dennis Gill to Assist Park

That "new" man you might have noticed in the halls at Science and Technology Base Programs recently is actually a person who used to be very familiar in STB—Dennis Gill.

"I was in STB six years, and I retired in '99," Gill said in a recent interview. Now he's back, on a part-time basis, to assist Min Park, the newly appointed interim leader of the STB-Education Program Office (EPO).

Kurt Steinhaus, former head of EPO, is on a leave of absence to serve as deputy secretary of education for the state of New Mexico.

(Please see GILL on page 2.)



Dennis Gill, an old friend who has returned

GILL (Cont'd from p.1)

STB Leader Allen Hartford has appointed Min Park as interim program manager of EPO, and, Gill said, "Allen just asked if I would come back and help in any way I can."

Gill said that as yet, he has no set work times and no set number of hours. He's spending his time "catching up, reading Department of Energy proposals, and talking to people in the program." After all, he said, "I've been gone for four years."

Experience at the Lab

Gill joined STB in 1993. In those days, the organization was in a building in the woods next to University House in Technical Area 3. About a year later, STB moved to the Administration Building. It moved again, to its present location in Canyon School, after Gill retired.

STB was new when Gill joined it. "We were working hard to build a new organization, to gain credibility within the Laboratory, to do a good job within the Laboratory," he said. "I think we did that." "My personal accomplishment was establishing the Office of Education Programs … collecting all these programs and going off and selling them," he added. At one time, he said, EPO had $10 million in funding.

Gill came to STB with a background of accomplishment. He joined Los Alamos National Laboratory in July 1966 and worked at the Lab for 35 years before his retirement. He is an electrical engineer with two bachelor's degrees from Rice University and a master's degree and Ph.D. in electrical engineering from the University of Texas in Austin.

Originally, he said, "My work was really with lasers." As an employee of J-8 (Timing and Firing), he worked on Nevada test shots. Subsequently, he was in L Division (the Laser Program) and in Applied Photochemistry, where he worked on laser isotope separation. In a series of reorganizations, Applied Photochemistry became CHM (Chemistry) and then CLS (Chemical and Laser Sciences). "I have very good memories of CLS," Gill said. He was deputy division leader there—under Hartford.

By the time he moved to STB, he said, he had held "all sorts of jobs"—and had been group leader of four different groups.

A Focus on Education

He had also served as a Los Alamos School Board member for one six-year term and was board chairman for two years—all before he arrived at STB. "I've always had a really strong interest in education," he said.

He and his wife raised two sons in Los Alamos —John, who is now a physician in Port Lavaca, Texas, and David, who has a Ph.D. in mechanical engineering and works for Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque. Gill has three grandsons.

Gill's first job after retirement was in Washington, D.C., where he worked for eight months for Beverly Berger at DOE—the source of EPO's major funding then and now. "Technically," he said, "I was a consultant to the Laboratory." But it was Berger who hired him. In Washington, he served as an aid to Berger, helping her with programs other than education—scholarship programs, university liaisons, and special awards (including one given out by the White House.)

"We really enjoyed our time in Washington," he said. It was a good experience, both in work and in recreation. It's hard for people here to understand just why the DOE-Washington reacts as it does to many situations, he noted. Its goals are greatly affected by Congress. He felt that his experience at DOE provided a useful education.

After he returned, he worked occasionally on special projects for Hartford in STB. "I've also continued to work for Beverly," he said. "She calls reasonably often" with research projects.

Gill said, "I think it's important for the Laboratory to encourage students to go into the fields of math and science—and to help them." From the Laboratory's point of view, he said, it's vital to identify students who are outstanding in the fields that are important at Los Alamos. "We need to identify them early and attract them to the Lab," he said. For that reason, both student and postdoctoral programs are very important. Getting young people interested in key fields early in their training "is a very good way to recruit the best and the brightest," he added.

Given his perspective, does he believe STB has had a good impact in these areas over the years?

"Yes, I do," he said. "We have attracted excellent students to the Laboratory, we have improved the teaching of math and science in northern New Mexico—and that, in turn, will improve diversity at the Laboratory." Of course, it's a never-ending task, he noted, because, "The Lab has a continuing need for new people."

"I'm delighted to be back," he said. "It's fun to see my many friends here and catch up on what's been going on."

PARK (Cont'd from p.1)

Allen Hartford, leader of STB, told him that Kurt Steinhaus, former head of STB-EPO, was taking a leave of absence to become deputy secretary of education for the state of New Mexico. Hartford asked Park to become interim leader of EPO. "Because of Allen and how much he has done for me," Park said, "It was something I could not say no to."

Outreach Is Vital

Park also felt strongly that he had a relationship with the community—built up over many years—that must be maintained because educational outreach is so very important for the Laboratory.

He returned to STB, once again establishing a 50-50 schedule. That schedule, however, is proving hard to maintain. "This is a management position," he said, "so it's really hard to leave the people alone." He is trying, however, to continue his work in biology while he manages EPO.

He said the interim position might last for approximately a year—but in terms of its importance, he added, "I don't consider this a temporary job. The time limits are irrelevant to me."

Asked about his philosophy and his goals in the job, he said he plans to concentrate on aligning individual goals of EPO employees with the Laboratory's institutional goals. The Laboratory tends to lose people whose goals don't align well with established directions, he said, and he doesn't want to see that happen.

People Must Come First

The Laboratory must "cherish" human resources—"put the people first"—to achieve lasting success, he believes.

"I have total confidence in the competence that these EPO people have," he said, noting especially their ability to work independently. He sees his task as allowing them "to do high-quality work—finding the resources as much as possible."

But, he repeated, whatever EPO does, "It should align very directly to the Laboratory mission and the Laboratory goals." He is looking at the 2000-student program and trying to find ways to strengthen critical skills development.

He is trying to empower the people in EPO, he said, asking them to look at their career goals beyond this organization, trying to establish mentor relationships linking support staff members and administrative staff members, and encouraging cross-training so that when someone leaves, others can step in quickly, and the organization can still function efficiently. Such preparation has always been planned, he said, but it has not been fully implemented.

He is also working toward the establishment of a "one-step archiving system for this EPO office." He describes what he envisions as "a very transparent communication process."

He praised his staff. "These are very, very good people here," he said, "competent people." Many have broad backgrounds and varied expertise, he added, that would stack up well in any division.

STB Projects Win Awards

Four projects involving Science and Technology Base Programs (STB) were among the Southwest Regional winners announced Jan. 24 at an Albuquerque meeting of the Kachina Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication (STC).

Two of the teams involved in these projects won Distinguished Technical Communication (DTC) awards and will go to Baltimore, Maryland, in May for the STC Annual Conference. They will be competing there with DTC winners from throughout the United States and abroad.

The team of **Nikki Cooper, Ileana Buican, and Gloria Sharp** won a DTC in the Technical Art Competition for their **LA Science No. 27, "Information, Science, and Technology in a Quantum World,"** produced in 2002. Issue No. 27 also won an Award of Excellence in Technical Publications.

(LA Science has been a frequent winner in STC competitions. Issue No. 26 on "Challenges in Plutonium Science" won a DTC and was declared Best of Show last year.)

The team of **Octavio Ramos (IM-1), Kathryn Ostic (CER-20), and Chris Brigman (IM-1)** won a DTC for brochure design of **"Critical Skills Development Program at LANL,"** which was printed for STB in April 2002.

Lisa Inkret of IM-1 won an Award of Merit in Technical Publications Competition for STB promotional materials entitled **"Jump Start Your Career."**

And the 2003 brochure **"Look @ LANL,"** produced for the STB-Education Program Office, won two Awards of Merit. **Donald Montoya, a graphic artist in IM-1**, won an Award of Merit for brochure design, and **Charmian Schaller, an IM-1 writer/editor assigned in STB**, won an Award of Merit in the Technical Publications Competition.

The Laboratory as a whole did well in the Southwest Regional STC competition. There were 129 entries from New Mexico, Oklahoma, Arizona, and California. The Laboratory submitted 46 entries—and 39 of them won awards.

SEAC Provides Director with View from Trenches

The Science and Engineering Advisory Council (SEAC) has a new chairman for 2004: John Isaacson of the Risk Reduction and Environmental Stewardship-Ecology Group (RRES-ECO).

SEAC was formed to address issues that affect the quality of the scientific and technical work done at the Laboratory. The council includes approximately 20 members. They are nominated by their divisions to serve staggered two-year terms.

New Members Took Office This Month

Nine of the members took office this month (in January 2004), and the remaining 11 are carryover members from 2003. In addition, SEAC, which operates with the assistance of Science and Technology Base Programs (STB), has a new liaison this year—Ed Hildebrand of STB-University Coordination—who was appointed when the previous liaison, Virgil Sanders, moved to the Operations Directorate.

STB selects the SEAC member who chairs the organization—Isaacson this year. That person attends the Laboratory Information Meetings (the LIM). In addition, the person chairing the Employee Advisory Council (EAC)—Teresa Salazar-Kerstiens this year—automatically serves on SEAC, and the person chairing SEAC automatically serves on the EAC.

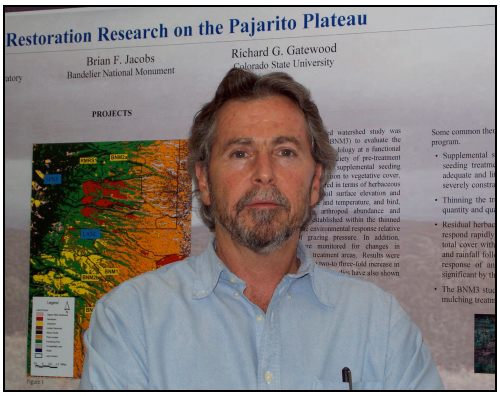
In an interview Jan. 26, Isaacson, who has been on SEAC for approximately six months, explained that the group is made up of nonmanagement staff members from technical divisions. The members discuss "issues affecting the work environment and science and technology productivity."

All technical divisions are invited to participate, he said.

Each year, the group decides in an open discussion which issues it feels affect performance and merit pursuit. The group usually talks with the Director of the Laboratory early in the year, and the Director also lists any issues he would like to see considered. SEAC then discusses each of the issues selected, developing a viewpoint that it shares with the Director in a formal response.

In 2003, for example, SEAC developed a list of criteria that could be attached to the request for proposals for the Laboratory management contract with the goal of preserving the quality and vitality of scientific and technical work done at the Laboratory. With the list in place, SEAC then developed measures that could be used to evaluate a management-contract candidate's performance on these criteria.

Asked to explain the importance of SEAC, Isaacson said, "I think it's important for management to hear the views and hear the issues that actually affect the (scientific) and technical staff." What SEAC delivers is the "from-the-trenches view," he said—a view that might not always reach the Director if all information were filtered through management.



John Isaacson, the new chairman of SEAC

"It's an all-volunteer council," Isaacson said. "We have good attendance." In addition to the role that SEAC fills for the Director, he noted, SEAC provides its members with an opportunity to "compare notes" and "talk about issues" and develop a broader view than the one they might have from their own divisions alone.

"This is an interesting time for the council," Isaacson commented, because the Laboratory is in "a period of change." The Laboratory is formalizing its business practices, revising the ways that it operates, and awaiting the outcome of the first competition for the management contract.

All of these issues "increase our value to management," Isaacson said.

He noted that all of the issues that SEAC is discussing at the moment "revolve around retention, recruitment, morale, and modernization." And he added, "I think those are big issues for management as well."

Hildebrand also shared his viewpoint on why SEAC is valuable. "Through its broad science and engineering expertise," he said, "SEAC serves the Director by providing an important portal to issues that affect the Laboratory science, engineering, and technical base."

Thse Are the SEAC Members

The specialty areas of the members of SEAC are interesting because they are so wide-ranging. At present, the following members of SEAC are serving terms that will expire on December 21, 2004: John Isaacson, chair, RRES-ECO; Jane Lataille, co-chair, Facilities and Waste Operations-Fire (FWO-FIRE); Teresa Salazar-Kerstiens, EAC representative, Security and Safeguards-Security Integration (S-2); Thomas E. Buhl, Health, Safety, and Radiation Protection-Director's Office (HSR-DO); George Busch, Chemistry Division-Advanced Diagnostics and Instrumentation Group (C-ADI);

(Please see SEAC on page 5.)

SEAC (Cont'd from p.4.)

David Costa, Nuclear Materials Technology-Pit Disposition Science and Technology (NMT-15); Fernando Garzon, Materials Science and Technology-Electronic and Electrochemical Materials and Devices (MST-11); Kyo Kim, Decision Applications Division-Nuclear Design and Risk Analysis (D-5); Frank Merrill, Physics Division-Subatomic Physics Group (P-25); Tommy Sewell, Theoretical Division-Detonation Theory and Applications Group (T-14); and Kenneth Wohletz, Earth and Environmental Sciences-Geophysics Group (EES-11).

The new appointees, serving terms that will run until December 31, 2005, are as follows: Mark C. Anderson, Engineering Sciences and Applications-Weapon Response (ESA-WR); Hong Cai, Bioscience Division-Cell Biology, Structural Biology, and Flow Cytometry (B-2); Michael L. Collins, Nuclear Nonproliferation-Safeguards Science and Technology (N-1); Melissa Rae Douglas, Applied Physics-Plasma Physics (X-1); William Junor, International, Space, and Response Technologies-Space and Atmospheric Sciences (ISR-1); Brett M. Kettering, Computing, Communications, and Networking-High-Performance Computing Environments (CCN-8); Paul M. Rightley, Dynamic Experimentation-Hydrodynamics (DX-3); Gary Rouleau, Los Alamos Neutron Science Center-Accelerator Maintenance and Development (LANSCE-2); and Beth A. Wingate, Computer and Computational Sciences-Methods for Advanced Scientific Simulations (CCS-2).

Jandacek's Background Includes Work in England, in Kiribati, at United Nations

Tonya Jandacek, a student employee who has done database and publication work during several stints in STB-University Coordination (STB-UC), has international experience that would be the envy of many older people.

She is a Los Alamos County native, the daughter of Petr and Louise Jandacek of White Rock. Her father is well known in the community as an art teacher at Barranca and Mountain Elementary Schools.

She graduated from Los Alamos High School in 1992—and then moved to Oxford, England, where she volunteered for St. Adate's Anglican Episcopalian Church. She did secretarial work, joined a group that performed religious dramas in schools, led the high school youth group, and worked in the church coffee shop on Fridays. The coffee shop was fun, she said in a recent interview. Friday was the shop's busiest day "because of the tourists."

"I definitely support people who want to take a year off," she said. "It was very educational for me."

Oxford was just the beginning of her travels.

Tonya Jandacek, left, with her coffee group at the United Nations.

She came back and entered New Mexico State University, where she got her undergraduate degree in 1997.

She was a student employee at Los Alamos National Laboratory, working in the Human Resources Division's student programs from the summer of 1997 through October 1998. During that time, she started the Student Association.

But in October 1998, she joined the Peace Corps, serving until January 2002 in Kiribati, an island nation in the middle of the Pacific Ocean on the International Dateline. She taught English to junior-high-school students on Nonouti, an island of 29.2 square kilometers and has a population of approximately 2,300.

It was a life-changing experience.

When she returned to the United States, she worked briefly for Mary Anne With in STB-UC (starting in May 2002), then enrolled in graduate school at "Thunderbird, the American Graduate School of International Management" in Glendale, Ariz. "I would like to start my own business in adventure tourism," she said. She sees her goal not only as working in an interesting profession but also as a way to help the economies and the peoples of nations less fortunate than the United States.

Her internationally oriented business skills and interests continued to develop as she qualified for internships and pursued a master's degree in business administration.

(Please see JANDACEK on page 6.)

JANDACEK (Cont'd from p.5)

Tonya Jandacek's photo of Kofi Anan (at the microphone) and Michael Douglas (to his left) at the U.N.'s International Peace Day events.

She returned to STB-UC, starting in May 2003, and then worked as an intern for New Mexico Lt. Gov. Diane Denish, promoting small-business development. She traveled with Denish, who gathered the appropriate state experts and visited many small New Mexico communities, meeting with local officials and business people in an effort to create new business initiatives.

In the fall of 2003, another opportunity opened up. She worked at the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs in September and October.

Asked about her work, she explained that in 1992 at the Johannesburg Summit, the United Nations approved "Agenda 21," an outline of how to make a country more sustainable. She was at the U.N. during the "Year of Human Settlement," she said. "We had reports that each government had written as to how they were complying with Agenda 21." Her department read the reports, picked out pieces that had to do with "human settlement"—sections on such subjects as housing for all, approaches to unemployment, a major Chinese relocation project, renewable energy, water quality, waste management, natural and human disaster preparedness, and air quality and pollution as related to human beings—and wrote a summary report for each country.

Her work was interesting. The General Assembly started meeting while she was there, and Secretary of State Colin Powell, President George W. Bush, and the presidents and prime ministers of many of the other member countries visited the U.N.

On International Peace Day in September, she got to meet U.N. Secretary General Kofi Anan, actor Michael Douglas (a strong supporter of the U.N.), chimpanzee expert Jane Goodall, and retired heavyweight champion Muhammed Ali. "That was kind of fun," she said. Asked who impressed her most, she said, "It was hard not to say 'Wow' when Kofi Anan walked into the room." He is very quiet, she said, but he is a person of great dignity.

She did not, however, like New York City. She was living in Spanish Harlem, just north of Central Park, and each day she took the subway to work. "It was overwhelming," she said. She especially noticed that it "was never quiet."

She had a mixed reaction to the U.N. itself. She described it as a "huge bureaucracy" where people communicated in different ways, and, as a result, everything had to be done in a specified order. She learned to recognize the arrogance of power in some situations, but she said, "I think there are parts of the U.N. that are very admirable and deserve to be idealized." She noted the U.N.'s peacekeeping work and its value as an international forum and source of international law. "However," she said, "I think people place too many expectations on what the U.N.'s international role should be." She doesn't think, for example, that the U.N. should be "held accountable for creating renewable energy resources"—an objective in the department where she worked.

She toured the U.S. Embassy while she was in New York, and, she said. "They talked to us about the U.S. holding money back from the U.N." The U.S. pays about 25 percent of the U.N. budget, she said—but the U.S. expects to be able to influence outcomes in return. She can see arguments on all sides of this position.

Asked whether she would be interested in going to work permanently at the U.N., she said she would probably not want to go back to U.N. Headquarters, but she might like to work in the field.

"I want to help people," she said—but she feels that she might be able to do that more effectively elsewhere.

She returned to STB-UC briefly in December 2003 and January 2004, then headed back to Arizona in mid-January, leaving STB behind. She is scheduled to graduate with her MBA in August.

She's still on the books as a casual at the Laboratory, but she's not quite sure what she wants to do next….

Mark Your Calendars

A meeting for all those working in Science and Technology Base Programs has been scheduled Feb. 26, 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., in Room 168 at the Canyon Complex.

Please mark your calendars and plan to attend.